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June 7, 2001

U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and its more than 1 million members, I urge you to cosponsor the **real** Patients Bill of Rights, H.R. 526, offered by Representatives Ganske and Dingell. Last Congress, the House overwhelmingly passed similar legislation, and we hope that momentum builds this Congress to enact this vital legislation soon through an early sign of strong support.

H.R. 526 is the real Patients Bill of Rights because it:

- ensures access to emergency care without prior authorization, following a "prudent lay person" standard;
- authorizes direct access to OB/GYNs and pediatricians as primary care physicians;
- provides access to pediatric specialties;
- provides for continuity of care when there is a change of plan or change in the provider network;
- provides for an independent external appeals process;
- authorizes patients to sue health plans in state courts, but disallows punitive damages if a plan complies with an independent external appeals decision; and
- provides "whistleblower" protections so that doctors and nurses can report patient quality problems without fear of retaliation from health maintenance organizations (HMOs), insurance companies or hospitals.

The whistleblower provision is vitally important to the 55,000 health care professionals represented by the AFT. They regularly face issues and concerns about patient care that they are ethically bound to report, and they should not place their jobs in jeopardy for doing so.

I strongly urge your support and co-sponsorship of H.R. 526. If you have any further questions about AFT's position on this or other health care issues please contact me or Bill Cunningham of our staff at (202) 879-4452.

Sincerely,

Charlotte J. Fraas, Director  
Department of Legislation